

Meeting Summary – DRAFT
Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee
April 20, 2010

Members Present: Ciliny Alce, Greg Baker, Maureen Carrington, Eleanor Duckett, Regina Dull, Chelsea Johnson, Larysa Kurylas, Sara Lappano, Zoe Lefkowitz, Chris Lindsay, Tom Martin, Susan Petersen, Fran Ware

Members Absent: Melissa Brown, Jonathan Fink, Manny Hidalgo, Diane Lynne, Leslie McDermott, James Mensah, Patrick Naehu, Erin Roberts, Dave Taghipour

County Staff Present: David Dise, Director – General Services; Natalie Cantor, Director – Mid-County Regional Services Center; Rob Klein and Pete McGinnity – Wheaton Redevelopment Program

Guests: Jason Wolff, Student-UMD; Andrew Bdzega, Student-CUA; William Moore -Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee; Marian Fryer - Wheaton Citizens Coalition; Ed Murtaugh - f Green Wheaton; Manuel Ochoa - Latino Economic Development Corporation; Taylor Brown - Wheaton Patch; Robert Wulff - B.F. Saul Co.; Brian O’Looney - Torti Gallas and Partners; Michael Vergason - Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Ltd.; Steve Simon - Simon Public Relations; and, Dana Davidson - Chesapeake Public Strategies

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Mr. Baker at 7:02 p.m.

Minutes: **Approved as presented, per Motion of Chris Lindsay, second of Susan Petersen and unanimous consent of all members present.**

Redevelopment Report – Mr. Klein provided progress/status reports on the following:

- The Planning Board Draft of the Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan has been forwarded to County Council and the County Executive to Council.
- BF Saul: Multiple aspects of the Concept Plan are being addressed concurrently, including the bus bays, parking, financial information (pro forma statements), and dialogue with the State Highway Administration.
- WRAC Membership – Anticipate announcement for new members circa 4/23. Need 6 new members due to term expiration. WRAC will leverage its presence at the Taste of Wheaton to recruit new members.
- BB&T Bank, Washington Property Co., Safeway/Patriot Realty and Kensington Heights2, LLC. continue to progress through the entitlement process
- At the County Executive’s March 23 Town Hall meeting, Mr. Leggett addressed primarily 2 issues: impacts of the proposed FY2012 budget on County Staff and services provided; and, his continued support for an economic incentive to bring Costco to Westfield Wheaton Mall

Subcommittee Reports

- Planning & Visioning

Mr. Martin, the subcommittee Chair, reported the following:

- The subcommittee will meet on May 2 to work on further comments to Sector Plan, now that the Plan has been delivered to the County Council

- Project Review

Ms. Petersen, the subcommittee chair reported the following:

- In lieu of its scheduled March meeting, subcommittee members attended 2 separate public meetings concerning the Washington Property Company and BB&T Bank projects, in preparation for their respective submissions to the Planning Board.
- At the April meeting, the subcommittee will consider 2 issues:
Kensington Heights Civic Association concerns about the Costco project and further revisions to the subcommittee's framework for reviewing development projects.

- Economic Development

Mr. McGinnity, Redevelopment Program staff reported:

- Verifying and mapping civic and homeowner associations within a one-mile radius of Downtown Wheaton was finalized.
- Surveys are being finalized for both Downtown Wheaton businesses and the surrounding residential communities to assess perceptions of Wheaton and disseminate information on pertinent redevelopment issues when appropriate.
- The subcommittee will solicit direct input from representative business organizations and individual business owners to identify and prioritize concerns related to the public/private development of Parking Lot 13 and the WMATA Bus bays.

- Green Wheaton – Mr. Murtaugh, on behalf of the group, reported:

- Green Wheaton's next meeting is April 26.
- Green Wheaton will have a booth at the Taste of Wheaton
- On 6/05 there will be a ribbon cutting for the Conservation Landscape Demonstration Site located at the corner of Reedy Dr. and Grandview Ave. in front of Parking Lot 13.
- Green Wheaton is planning a "Meet & Greet" to kick off its transition to a non-profit organization. The organization seeks board members and financial support
- The Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board selected Green Wheaton as its 2011 Civic Association of the Year.

Mid-County Regional Services Center/Wheaton Urban District Update – Ms. Cantor reported on the following:

- Community members in proximity to 2915 University Blvd had complained of a business –a Palm Reader – operating from a residential location. Code Enforcement advises it is a permitted use.

- Aggressive Towing – Eric Friedman, Office of Consumer Protection, Cmdr. John Damsky of MCPD and Ms. Cantor are working to mitigate aggressive towing in the Urban District. The strategy includes an education campaign to advise the community as to what towing practices are within legal parameters.
- Urban Noise - Urban districts working on legislation that would define urban noise areas that would permit greater levels of noise than in a suburban setting.
- County's Operating Budget – In the proposed FY 12 Budget, the County Executive is recommending that Regional Service Centers, Office of Human Rights, Commission for Women, and Office of Community Partnerships be merged into a newly created Office of Community Engagement. Levels of support staff for the new office will be significantly reduced. The proposal is meeting resistance from the Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee.

Budget Update – Mr. Dise reported on the following:

- The Redevelopment Program was impacted by budget challenges. Most notably, Sharon Lasswell's full-time position was eliminated upon her recent retirement. Countywide, approximately 200 positions that are currently filled will be eliminated in the FY12 budget.
- The Budget has affected Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), as the County strives to maintain appropriate debt service ratios to ensure AAA bond ratings.
- The proposed Redevelopment Program CIP calls for maintaining at current levels of funding. This will allow a small amount of streetscaping to continue. The balance of Redevelopment Program CIP funds will be budgeted for staff time, and engineering resources related to the B.F. Saul project.
- Library/REC Center project – The FY 2011 amended budget did not retain dollars initially allocated to assess Rafferty Center/Rec. Center feasibility. These funds would have been used to support engineering costs for the new Library/Recreation Center project. Design costs are proposed for the FY12 Budget and Engineering & Construction costs are budget for FY13. This project has broad support from CE and Council.
- The County's Strategic Plan for Capital Improvement Projects -FY13-18 CIP – starts next fall. While the County Executive might recommend pushing projects further out Mr. Dise doesn't anticipate, at this time, that this will affect Wheaton Redevelopment or the Library Project

Town square Presentation - B.F. Saul

Note: This portion of the WRAC meeting was videotaped in its entirety. An unedited version of this presentation can be viewed online by visiting:

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/DGS/Dir/OPD/resources/wmvs/BF_Saul_Town_Square_Presentation.wmv

Mr. Wulff introduced the Town square discussion and made the following points:

- B.F.Saul recognizes the importance of the Town square to the community
- Because B. F. Saul is not an expert in designing public spaces it engaged those who are,
- It also created an ad hoc committee of local stakeholders, to ensure that community desires and expectations for a town square were heard.

Mr. Wulff then introduced Brian O’Looney of Torti Gallas and Partners, and Michael Vergason of Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Ltd who continued the presentation:

- The Ad Hoc Town Square Committee met twice. The sessions focused on:
 - Educating the group about general principles for designing public space
 - Arriving at a consensus on the size and the location (Lot 13), of the Square, and based on these how specific design feature can be accommodated
 - Discussing features that can be included in Wheaton’s Town Square to accommodate eating, socializing, exercise, play, entertainment and events (Taste of Wheaton, Summer concerts, Farmer’s Market).
- Based upon Ad Hoc Committee input, 3 general explorations for a Town Square were proposed: “the Square”, “the Lawn” and “the Grove”. Basic elements of each are as follows:
 - The Square: Focus is on a square 80’ x 80’ panel of flat lawn, cut into hillside on its northeast corner. Steps and seat walls frame the lawn. On the northern edge is a double alley of trees. The eastern side (parallel to Triangle Lane) is flanked by a canopy (glass or vine covered) – a flexible space that can accommodate a Farmers Market or an art show. This area has a diagonal emphasis and focuses on southwest corner that incorporates a raised podium that could be used as a stage. The design incorporates Triangle lane as a shared street/alley format i.e. no curb, with pavers to accommodate pedestrians while still allowing parallel parking on the other side of triangle Lane.
 - The Lawn: This treatment broadens and lengthens the lawn panel (130’ x 90’) identified in the Square concept. The lawn falls with the slope. On the east and west sides are steps that pull Triangle lane in. There is a single line of trees at northern edge accommodating flexible seating. These could look down to a stage/participatory dry fountain with an architectural backdrop/framework on the southern edge of the Lawn.
 - The Grove: This employs a continuous canopy of trees, approximately 30’ wide, extending out to the edges of the street, around the Town square perimeter. Deciduous trees would be planted, to capitalize on the change of seasons and its impact on the Square. The middle, approximately 80’ x 80’, would be hard surfaced - some type of gravel - and open to sun and sky. The open area would accommodate a 40’, slightly raised, circular podium that could serve as a stage and/or a dry fountain.

Note: These alternatives (and likely others) will be revisited after the County grants B.F. Saul development authority. At this stage in the process, the size of the town square needed to be determined to assess project feasibility.

After the presentation, Mr. Dise encouraged the committee to visit public spaces in the region to see how some of the attributes presented are expressed in a particular setting.

In conclusion, Mr. Wulff advised the committee that since the size of the Town Square seemed to be established B.F. Saul, could now determine the size of buildings on the site. This would allow B. F. Saul , the County and WMATA to now begin discussing and negotiating the financial aspects of project over the next few months. The parties' focus will shift to “ the business deal”.

Public Comment – There were no comments or questions from the Public

Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.